

A Primer for Oil Spill Remote Sensing

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Effective planning for cleaning up and containing an oil spill depends on the knowledge of the location, fate and transport of the slicks. Remote sensing continues to play an important role for oil spill identification and location; however, there are inherent weaknesses in these systems. In particular, ambiguities or 'false positives' involved with interpretation of the data can mislead emergency responders. New approaches for reducing ambiguities associated with oil identification and developments in sensors that measure slick thickness suggest an increase in the use of remote sensing in the spill response effort. This paper provides a brief introduction to remote sensing and how the technology is used for detecting oil slicks, the limitations of these systems and possible research areas.